

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 3-20 are pending in the application.

In Paragraph No. 3 of the Action, Claims 1 and 3-20 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,265,479 to Ichikawa et al.

Applicant submits that this rejection should be withdrawn because Ichikawa does not disclose or render obvious the natural rubber of the present invention.

The Examiner contends that the nitrogen content of the rubber compositions in Ichikawa can be the same as that claimed. Per the Examiner, Ichikawa teach that the means for separation can be centrifugation, and since Ichikawa is not limited to the use of centrifugation and identifies conventional means for separation, it would have been *prima facie* obvious to separate the rubber by means other than centrifugation.

As to the nitrogen content of the rubber compositions, Applicant submits that the present claimed nitrogen content range of 0.12 to 0.30% by weight would not be obvious based on Ichikawa. Ichikawa discloses deproteinizing a rubber latex to obtain a rubber that has a nitrogen content of 0.1% or less, preferably 0.05% or less, and more preferably 0.02% or less (col. 5, lines 21-25). Ichikawa further discloses that when the nitrogen content exceeds the range of 0.1% or less, there is fear that the occurrence of the allergic reaction can not be sufficiently suppressed because of an insufficient degree of deproteinization (col. 5, lines 25-28). Therefore, not only does Ichikawa not disclose Applicant's claimed nitrogen content, Ichikawa actually teaches away from the claimed nitrogen content.

Further, Applicant submits that a deproteinizing treatment as taught by Ichikawa is conducted to produce a natural rubber having a total nitrogen content not more than 0.10% by

weight for medical purposes against allergies, and in the treatment proteins in a natural rubber are usually decomposed and highly removed.

On the contrary, the object of the present invention is to provide a natural rubber in which proteins connecting branching points of the natural rubber are decomposed in order to cut off the branching points, which improves workability of the natural rubber.

The treatment of the present claimed invention recites “coagulating the natural rubber latex obtained after the deproteinizing treatment without separation of non-rubber components by centrifugation and drying a product of the coagulation.” Accordingly, the natural rubber achieved by the present invention exhibits not only improved workability but also excellent heat resistance because of the non-rubber components remaining in the natural rubber.

Additionally, the test for obviousness is what the combined teachings of the references would have suggested to those of ordinary skill in the art and the proper inquiry is whether the prior art as a whole suggests the desirability of the claimed invention. See MPEP § 2143.01(I) and (II).

Claim 1 calls for a natural rubber to be obtained by both “a deproteinizing treatment of a natural rubber latex and has a total nitrogen content adjusted in a range of 0.12 to 0.30% by weight,” and “coagulating the natural rubber latex obtained after the deproteinizing treatment without separation of non-rubber components by centrifugation and drying a product of the coagulation.”

Ichikawa teaches away from the claimed nitrogen content as discussed above. Thus, the prior art as a whole does not suggest the desirability of the claimed invention. Accordingly, Claims 1 and 8 are not obvious over Ichikawa.

Claims 3-7 and 9-20 depend directly or indirectly from claim 1. Thus, Claims 3-7 and 9-20 are not obvious over Ichikawa for at least the same reasons that claim 1 is not obvious over Ichikawa.

In view of the above, reconsideration and withdrawal of the § 103(a) rejection based on Ichikawa et al '479 are respectfully requested.

Allowance is respectfully requested. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

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